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CONTACT: David Miller, NOAA  
(202) 482-6090

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**NOAA KICKS OFF NATIONWIDE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROGRAM**

The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will hold a meeting on August 27, 2002, in Seattle, Wash., to gather input for its new strategic plan, which will be a guide for NOAA scientific and research efforts in years to come. The program is open to the public and will be held at the Westin Seattle Hotel, 1900 Fifth Avenue, from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This is the first of six public meetings to be conducted nationwide by the federal science agency over the next 60 days.

Announcing the commencement of a new strategic planning process, Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., USN (Ret.), Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA administrator stated, "We intend to build a document that will allow the agency, through working with its constituents, to be more effective and responsive to the nation's needs now and into the future."

In its final form, expected to be released in March 2003, the plan will provide a comprehensive blueprint to guide the \$3.4 billion federal science agency and will include a flexible, rolling horizon as opposed to a fixed time span. NOAA's current five year strategic plan was originally developed in 1993 and revised in 1998.

The goals and actions contained in the new plan will also incorporate recommendations previously developed by an internal program review team. These recommendations seek to improve integration across the agency, increase efficiency, promote increased responsiveness to customer needs, and support President Bush's Management Agenda. The recommendations are located at:  
<http://node3.hpcc.noaa.gov/internal/>.

Lautenbacher has assigned Timothy R.E. Keeney, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, to lead the planning process.

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“The creation of an effective strategic plan is a significant management tool,” Keeney said. “Gathering comments from the vast array of NOAA customers is a vital first step in this demanding course of action. I encourage anyone with an interest in NOAA programs to participate in these meetings as this input will be key to NOAA’s future direction.”

The strategic planning process entails a rigorous schedule of constituent meetings in the following cities in addition to Seattle: New Orleans, La. on Sept. 5; Boston, Mass. on Sept. 18; Washington, D.C. on Sept. 23; Boulder, Colo. on Sept. 26; and Cleveland, Ohio on October 16. It will continue with the development of a draft plan available for public review and comment in early December.

Information about the strategic planning process is available at <http://www.osp.noaa.gov>. Results from each constituent meeting will be posted at this site, and the public can make comments directly via the internet.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation’s coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.